

# N E W S - L E T T E R

of the

CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION

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Tous les hommes cherchent d'être heureux; cela est sans exception; quelques différents moyens qu'ils emploient, ils tendent tous à ce but. Ce qui fait que les uns vont à la guerre, et que les autres n'y vont pas, est ce même désir, qui est dans tous les deux, accompagnés de différentes vues. La volonté ne fait jamais le moindre démarche que vers cet objet. C'est le motif de toutes les actions de tous les hommes, jusqu'à ceux qui vont se pendre.

Blaise Pascal -- Pensées

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This issue continues the bibliography, giving special attention to periodicals and indices. There are further excerpts from letters received by the Conference committee and a review of courses in which our approach to criticism is incorporated.

## Bibliography (II)

Who psychoanalyzes the psychoanalysts? And who, by the same token, will analyze the slips and errors of the compilers of psycho-literary bibliographies? We might fall back on the excuse that this bibliography is a continued (if not continuous) story in serial form, but we are still blushing at our failure to include in our first issue

Edmund Wilson - Axel's Castle (New York, 1931), a study in imaginative literature of 1870-1930,

and

Edmund Wilson - The Wound and the Bow (Boston, 1941), seven studies in literature, chief of which are the title essay on the critical use of depth psychology and "The Two Scrooges," the pioneer analytic study of Dickens.

And while we are on this subject, we report a slip caught by Mr. Wormhoudt. Marie Bonaparte's study of Poe has been translated:

Marie Bonaparte - Edgar Poe, translated into English by John Rodker, with a foreword by Sigmund Freud (London, 1949).

There are two reviews of this book in the Psychoanalytic Quarterly, A. Kardiner's in Vol. III (1934) and a longer one by Hanns Sachs in Vol. IV (1935).

Mr. Wormhoudt has also reminded us of Dr. Jones's studies of Hamlet. That this subject was dear to the heart of the great British psychoanalyst is evident from the number of times he published works on the subject, in various forms:

Ernest Jones - Hamlet and Oedipus (New York, 1949), a revision of an essay published in 1910 in the American Journal of Psychology, and in 1923 as the first chapter of the author's Essays in Applied Psycho-analysis. In substantially the same form it appeared as The Problem of Hamlet and the Oedipus-Complex in a special edition of Hamlet published in London in 1947.

This was reviewed by Harry Slochower in Complex, Vol. III (Winter, 1951).

See also: Ernest Jones - "The Death of Hamlet's Father" in the International Journal of Psycho-analysis (1948) 29, 174-76, in which Dr. Jones stresses the ambivalent quality of Hamlet's emotional attitude toward his father and the father-images in the play.

Another development of this theme is to be found in a most fascinating piece of non-technical psychoanalytic writing,

Frederic Wertham - Dark Legend (New York, 1941), in which the author uses literary material from Hamlet and the Oresteia to clarify his concept of what he calls the Orestes-complex.

The constant inter-play of concepts from depth psychology as a means of literary interpretation and the use of literary material to develop and explain the older and newer ideas in depth psychology is implicit in much of the literature on "both sides of the fence." Mr. Edel, for instance, commenting on his own work,

Leon Edel - The Ghostly Tales of Henry James (Rutgers, N.Y., 1949), says "The book would never have taken the form it did without studies in anxiety neurosis, etc. and my method throughout has been psycho-critical (to coin a term)."

#### Periodicals and Indices

When we come to examine the literature in the periodical field, we find that most of the work is to be found in publications devoted to psychology rather than to literary scholarship. The effects on psychological criticism of publication in primarily clinical journals have not yet been assessed. Most obviously, vocabulary is affected. It may well be that a considerable amount of the hostility to psychological criticism can be traced to a dislike of "jargon," although the vocabulary thus objected to by the general reader is not out of place in the professional journal where the criticism appeared.

Less obvious but perhaps more influential is the slanting of the criticism which comes from the preoccupation of the critic. The clinician is necessarily concerned with the primary process and with those secondary elaborations which "distort." To many general readers, the clinically preoccupied critic seems engaged in an exercise in reduction of the artist or art-work to bald -- often dismaying -- diagnostic categories.

The literary critic -- as distinguished from the clinical, be he doctor of philosophy or doctor of medicine -- may well make his signal contribution to this new critical discipline through a preoccupation with secondary elaboration, with what Lowes called "the shaping spirit of the imagination." This does not mean that the critic would make less use of the insights and techniques of depth psychology. The change would be a change of emphasis, together with the inclusion of specific training in literary history and literary techniques which are the wealth of the literary critic.

These questions are not unrelated to the difficulties of members of our group who seek to place articles and books. What matters for present purposes of bibliography, however, is that writing in our field is much more frequently to be found in Imago, in Complex, and in the many clinical journals than in PMLA or The American Scholar.

The material of the clinical journals is indexed in the Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus (available in New York City in the main reading rooms of the New York Public Library and the New York Academy of Medicine). Books are indexed under author; articles, in a single alphabet, are to be found under author and subject. The restriction to clinical journals is a limitation, though not a really serious one for the adventurous. None of the following articles would be indexed in the Index Medicus:

Arthur Wormhoudt - "The Unconscious Identification of Words and Milk," American Imago, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March, 1949), 57-68;

----- "Freud and Literary Theory," American Imago, Vol 6, No. 3 (Sept., 1949), 3-11;

----- "The Unconscious Bird Symbol in Literature," American Imago, Vol. 7, No. 2 (July, 1950) 173-182;

----- "A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Perspective, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter, 1949), 109-119 (See also Basler's Sex, Symbolism and Psychology in Literature, pp. 203 et seq.);

Harry Slochower - "Freud and Marx in Contemporary Literature," Sewanee Review for July, 1941;

----- "Freudian Motifs in Moby Dick," Complex, Vol. 2 (Fall, 1950) 16-26;

----- "Moby Dick: The Myth of Democratic Expectancy," American Quarterly, Vol. 2 (Fall, 1950), 259-270;

----- "Hamlet: Myth of Renaissance Sensibility," American Imago, Vol. 7 (November, 1950), 197-238;

Charles I. Glicksberg - "Literature and Freudianism," Prairie Schooner, Vol. 23, pp. 359-370;

Wayne Burns - "The Novelist as Revolutionary," The Arizona Quarterly, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Spring, 1951), 13-27 (see especially pp. 24-25).

The list of publications indexed in the Index Medicus will send the curious to the bound volumes on the shelves for other articles than those which seem primarily literary. The first magazine in the list, The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry has little for the general reader, but one article

Phyllis Greenacre - "Child Wife as Ideal: Sociological Consideration," (January, 1947), 167-171,

refers at some length to child-wives in literature: o.g., David Copperfield's Dora and Virginia Clemm Poe, wife of Edgar A. Poe.

The American Journal of Psychiatry is not primarily psychoanalytic; in fact, some of its contributors are openly hostile. It is valuable chiefly for its many brief reviews, of Hanns Sachs's Creative Unconscious, for example, in the November, 1943 issue (hostile) and--for further example--Thomas Clark Pollock's The Nature of Literature: Its Relation to Science, Language and Human Experience, in the January, 1944 issue.

Also indexed is the British Journal of Medical Psychology, which prints few--but excellent--articles, valuable in that esthetic theory is of frequent concern. Volume 17 (1938) contains

John S. Barwell - "The Nature of Ugliness," pp. 119-127;

Ernst Kris and Ernst Gombrich - "The Principles of Caricature," pp. 319-342 -- both articles with extensive bibliographies; and

"Descriptive Reviews" (which are truly that) -- this volume featuring a review of Maude Bodkin's Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (see Bibliography - I).

There is a full list of contributors at the end of each volume, plus a list of books reviewed. Many of the clinical journals are finely indexed.

Like the British Journal of Medical Psychology, Character and Personality: an International Quarterly for Psychodiagnostics & Allied Studies (published in London) prints a few -- but excellent -- articles on literary criticism. The Rosenzweig study of Henry James (see Bibliography I) first appeared here. Unfortunately, the contents are not listed in the Index Medicus. An examination of the first ten bound volumes gives the following:

Vol. I (September 1932 to June 1933) - nothing of direct interest.

Vol. II - H. B. Fantham - "Charles Dickens: A Biological Study of His Personality" -- As the title would indicate, this is a psychology more somatic than depth.

Vol. III to Vol. VI, inclusive - nothing in literary criticism.

Vol. VII (1938, 1939) - Harold Grier McCurdy - "Literature and Personality,"

an article which sets up the hypothesis and method to be followed in later articles and warns of errors to be avoided by the literary critic using psychological techniques. (There is a reference to a 1931 study of Hardy's novels.)

Vol. VIII (1939, 1940) H. G. McCurdy - "Literature and Personality Analysis of the Novels of D. H. Lawrence." There are two parts, in the spring and summer issues; the thirteen major novels by Lawrence are discussed.

There is nothing of literary interest in the tenth volume (the Rosenzweig article appeared later), but an incidental sentence in the ninth volume is extremely provocative.

Vol. IX (1940, 1941) Fritz Heider (Smith College) - "The Description of the Psychological Environment in the Work of Marcel Proust,"

who is characterized as "one of the novelists who have the reputation of being good psychologists -- [who] can give evidence of their knowledge of human nature in different ways." The questor through the periodicals cannot fail to note the frequency with which certain authors and works recur. One wonders: Are there particularly "psychological" novelists and poets? Is there a defensible reason for the frequency of occurrence of Poe, Proust, Melville, Henry James (but not William), the Brontës, Dostoevsky, and -- of course -- Shakespeare?

Would there not be a possible thesis project (or projects) in surveys of literary-psychological studies to determine frequency, perhaps attempting to determine the characteristics which build "the reputation of being good psychologists"? Might not such a survey help guard against repetition? Could it be useful in helping a group such as ours to arrive at methods? at hypotheses? at standards? Might it suggest other, less obviously "psychological" novelists, dramatists, and poets for study?

The very informality of our News-Letter and of the Conference system with which we must work can be turned to our advantage if these bibliographies and letters and our Conference-to-come in Detroit are used for exploration of possibilities. Again may we request your written comments and suggestions?

But getting back to the subject of indices: Psychological Abstracts, known to most of you, is indexed at the end of each year. If you have access to bound volumes, you can quickly get an over-view. There are fourteen subdivisions for each issue, three of them of special interest to us. Most obvious is the section entitled General Social Processes (incl. Esthetics).

The January, 1940 issue -- chosen at random -- listed an article from the Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases - "Kate the Curst" (The Taming of the Shrew). Another section is entitled Psychoanalysis, Dreams, Hypnosis. In the

January, 1940 issue is listed Walter de la Mare's Behold, this Dreamer! Under Character and Personality (not to be confused with the magazine) is listed "Goya: a Medical Study," which used paintings as data.

The Index Medicus does include articles from the Psychoanalytic Quarterly, The Psychoanalytic Review, and the International Journal of Psychoanalysis. Most of our readers are acquainted with these journals. The first one began in 1932. The contents of Vol. I are interesting:

Floyd Dell - "An Autobiographical Critique," Psychoanalytic Quarterly;

J. C. Flügel - "Maurice Bodel's Jerome: a Study in Contrasting Types," Psychoanalytic Quarterly (Vol. I, 1932);

and a review of Hanna Sachs's Caligula (pp. 364-366). In the next volume:

Franz Alexander - "A Note on Falstaff," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Vol. II (1933),

is concerned rather with Falstaff's audience than with the character himself, suggesting a method of getting "data of general value about human nature" from "people's reactions to different products of art and literature." The reactions to Falstaff should be significant; just what has been the nature of his appeal?

Other articles from this Quarterly:

Sandor Lorand - "Fairy Tales and Neurosis," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Vol. IV (1935);

Clarissa Rinaker - "A Psychoanalytical Note on Jane Austen," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Vol. V (1936);

Helene Deutsch - "Don Quixote and Don Quixotism," Psychoanalytic Quarterly Vol. VI (1937);

I. F. Grant Duff - "A One-Sided Sketch of Jonathan Swift," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Vol. VI (1937);

Milton L. Miller - "Balzac's Père Goriot," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Vol. VI.

The Psychoanalytic Review dates from 1913. There is a subject-author index for volumes one to eighteen (1913-1931). The listings are rather brief. The materials in the journal are interesting. Your quoter knew of a 1925 article on Byron, and went on to examine a few of the subsequent volumes.

J. H. Cassity - "Psychopathological Glimpses of Lord Byron," Psychoanalytic Review, Vol. XII (1925);

R. Bain - "[Herbert] Spencer's Love for George Eliot," Psa. Review, Vol. XIV (1927)

P. L. Goitein - "'The Lady from the Sea': a Fresh Approach to an Analysis of Ibsen's Drama," Psa. Review, Vol. XIV (1927);

S. C. Burchell - "Marcel Proust, an Interpretation of His Life," Psa. Review, Vol. XV (1928);

----- "Dostoevsky and the Sense of Guilt," Psa. Review, Vol. XVII (1930);

L. Dooley - "Psychoanalysis of the Character and Genius of Emily Brontë," Psa. Review, Vol. XVII (1930);

B. Freedman - "Italo Svevo: A Psychoanalytical Novelist," Psa. Review, Vol. XVIII (1931);

In the 1921 volume of the International Journal of Psychoanalysis is a "Collective Review" by Hanns Sachs, entitled "Aesthetics and Psychology of the Artist." In six pages (94-100) the author briefly discusses, in English, a series of forty articles. As is obvious, the article is valuable bibliographically. The articles had previously appeared in German, chiefly in Imago.

Hanns Sachs - "The Tempest," International Journal of Psychoanalysis, (1923) pp. 43-88;

C. A. Segler - "Slips of the Tongue in the Norse Saga," International Journal of Psa. (1923) pp. 133-136;

Ernest Jones - Review of Otto Jespersen's Language. Its Nature, Development, and Origin, (published the preceding year) in the 1923 Journal, pp. 354-5.

Deserving special mention -- and special attention from our group -- is a series of articles which appeared over a decade in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology, edited at the time by Morton Prince and Ernest Jones.

F. C. Prescott (Cornell) - "Poetry and Dream," Vol. VII (1912-13), pp. 17-46.

The article shows a sound knowledge of English poetry; it is extensive in coverage, somewhat to the disadvantage of the material and the resulting conclusions. A 72-page brochure, evidently a re-print, was published in 1919.

Eugene C. Taylor - "Shelley as Myth-Maker," Journ. of Abnormal Psych., Vol. XIV (1919-20), pp. 64-90, cites Prescott's article and appears to use it. Taylor professes to use psychoanalysis but cites Jung rather than Freud.

F. C. Prescott - The Poetic Mind (New York, 1922) incorporates previous material, but usually extends it or re-works it. The 296-page book is essentially new. It received a detailed review, in an appropriate journal:

Gary F. Jacob - "The Psychology of Poetic Talent," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology (name changed with volume sixteen) XVII, (1922-3), 231-53.

Periodical in nature is the Yearbook of Psychoanalysis, managing editor, Sander Lorand. Volume I appeared in 1945 but began with articles of an earlier date. The announced aim was the covering of "current contributions to the scientific progress of psychoanalysis." The first volume reprinted the first essay in Hanns Sachs The Creative Unconscious, "The Community of Daydreams."

Vol. II (1946) reprinted S. Freud - "Dostoevsky and Parricide."

Vol. III (1947) Fritz Wittels - "Psychoanalysis and History: The Nibelungs and the Bible."

Vol. IV (1948) Felix Deutsch - "Artistic Expression & Neurotic Illness" a somewhat revised article printed earlier in American Imago, on Charles Kingsley.

C. D. Daly - "The Mother Complex in Literature."

John Skinner - "Lewis Carroll's Adventures in Wonderland" (American Imago)

Vol. V (1949) - Edward Hirschmann - "Boswell: the Biographer's Character."

Mark Kanzer - "The Passing of 'The Oedipus Complex' in the Greek Drama," a discussion of Oedipus at Colonus.

In the first edition of Psychoanalysis Today, edited by Sander Lorand, 1933, appeared

Fritz Wittels - "Psychoanalysis and Literature" - a must on any reading list, which space confines to this brief listing. It was reprinted, with some revision, in the revised edition of 1944 which also contained the valuable

Ernst Kris - "Approaches to Art," with extensive bibliography and remarks on hypotheses which our group might very well study and discuss.

Correspondence

[For the benefit of subscriber-members who did not attend the Conference last December and for some who may have forgotten the very cogent contributions of Messrs. Boothe and Hayakawa, we reproduce excerpts from their letters to the Conference.]

From B. E. Boothe, Director of Professional Education, The Menninger Clinic, Topeka, Kansas, (December, 1950):

Dr. Karl Menninger has referred to me your . . . announcement of a meeting for the purpose of discussing the psychoanalytic approach to literary criticism. . . . I feel it would be desirable for him to express his views directly to you, but I am sure that I represent him fairly by expressing a great deal of interest in your project, and the hope that you will achieve an interested committee who are willing to study the difficult subject you propose in some systematic and continued way.

I have worked for five years with Dr. Menninger in the development of a psychiatric education program for physicians, clinical psychologists, social workers and others. . . . Before undertaking my present work, I was a teacher of literature and creative writing for about twenty years. Here in a psychiatric community I have conducted a seminar each year devoted to the reading and interpretation of imaginative literature. Although the primary objective of the seminar is to assist the psychiatric specialist to utilize imaginative literature, the method of the seminar means directing as much attention as possible to the application of dynamic psychology in literary interpretation.

My feeling, and I believe the feeling of the psychiatric teachers I have known here in Topeka who are well informed about literature and critically interested in it, is that the use of twentieth-century psychiatric knowledge in criticism is on the whole primitive, fragmentary, and haphazardly motivated. Criticism written by psychoanalysts tends to be very narrow in its purpose and lacking in the insight which must come from a literary discipline. With notable exceptions, criticism of this type written by literary scholars tends to be rationalistic, unimaginative, uncertain.

Promising pioneer attempts to bring the psychology of literary criticism up to date, however, have been made, and the effort to clarify the issues and objectives of psychologically sound criticism would naturally seem to a community such as ours very important. Perhaps a way could be found of including members on an MLA Committee who might represent psychiatric education.

From S. I. Hayakawa, Editor of ETC.: A Review of General Semantics, (December, 1950):

When the MLA met in New York in 1948 I was chairman of the Conference on the Semantic Approach to Literature which was extremely well attended. There was certainly enough interest at the time to warrant the continuation of this conference and I was asked to call it again but the pressure of other duties prevented me from doing so.

It now appears to me, however, that there is a close relationship between psychoanalytical, semantic and anthropological approaches to the study of literature. I think that literary criticism and history are much

in need, at the present time, of fresh influences. The degree of overlap among the psychoanalytical, semantic and cultural (in the anthropological sense) approaches to literary problems suggests to me that those who are interested in any one of these join forces for the more effective advancement of their point of view. . . .

### Courses

[Our request for a listing of courses in literature which were or are characterized by our specialized approach elicited from Mrs. Floissner an expression of doubt—as set forth in the excerpt from her letter published in our last issue—as to the existence of such courses. We have, however, succeeded in obtaining an interesting list of offerings, which are set forth below. The courses are described substantially in the language of the various instructors, as communicated to us.]

Mr. Basler, during the years when he was associated with the George Peabody College for Teachers at Nashville, Tenn., as chairman of the Department of English, used to offer a course which he describes as follows:

Psychological Perspectives in Literature: two semesters, Graduate level, 3 hrs.; (1) European writers: Dostoevsky, Proust, Thomas Mann, Kafka. These four provide the literature read and analysed. The class is thrown immediately into the reading of Dostoevsky. A list of outside readings—Froude, Jung, et al.—is provided, with suggestions as to which selections may most profitably be read first. The student is left to his own initiative to acquire such knowledge of depth psychology as is necessary to follow lectures and discussions. The primary object of the course is an understanding and appreciation of the literature studied, which cannot be had without the aid of depth psychology. The acquirement of an understanding of depth psychology is a sine qua non of the course, but is not in itself an object. (2) English and American writers: Coleridge, Tennyson, T. S. Eliot, Poe, plus selected pieces from modern writers, Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf, Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson, Conrad Aiken, and others. The same list of outside readings in Froude et al. is used in the second semester, but they are, as in the first, not primarily for lecture or class discussion in themselves.

In each semester the pièce de résistance of the student's work is a seminar-type paper prepared on a particular writer (or a particular piece of literature in the case of extended and minute analysis) which is delivered and defended by the student before the group during the last half of the course on a scheduled day. The subject of the paper is chosen by the student with the consent of the instructor, and none of the particular works analysed by the instructor and class, prior to the beginning of the seminar reports, are eligible for the term papers.

Mr. Wormhoudt reports the following courses offered by him at the Minnesota State Teachers College at St. Cloud, Minn., "using the psychological (as well as sociological) approach":

A three quarter course in masterpieces of World Literature from Homer to Tolstoy in which individual works are analysed in terms of psychoanalysis.

A three quarter course in literature of the Neo-Classical, Romantic, and Victorian periods using the same approach.

Mr. Slochower reports the following course offered by him at the New School for Social Research in New York City:

Myth Patterns in the Great Literary Classics: The first semester, from Job to Gargantua, includes also the Greek tragedies concerning Prometheus, Orestes, and Oedipus, as well as The Bacchae, The Aeneid, The Divine Comedy, Don Quixote, The Prince, Phedro, and Pantagruel. The second semester, from Hamlet to Dr. Faustus, includes also Faust, Siegfried, Moby Dick, Huckleberry Finn, The Brothers Karamazov, War and Peace, The Trial, and Pelle the Conqueror.

The course has a twofold aim: (1) an analysis of the myth motifs which recur in the literary classics. The recurrence of those motifs and the motivation of the individual character are analyzed on the basis of Freudian psychology. (2) However, the attempt is made to localize each myth in terms of its historic-social situation, as a summation of the particular cultural epoch in which it is rooted.

Mr. Slochower gives a similar one-semester course at the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry. The number of literary myths selected is smaller and the method stresses the psychologic approach.

Mr. Burns reports as follows from the University of Washington at Seattle (in a letter dated May 30, 1951):

About courses being given here: I wish I could send you a definite listing and description, as you request, but I find it impossible to be that definite. The best I can do, speaking generally, is to say that the department as a whole is quite open-minded in its attitude toward psychology and literature, that a number of professors either apply (or would welcome the application of) depth psychology as a means of understanding literature and the creative process—always provided, of course, this application is consistent with sound scholarship and criticism.

While I am the only one in the department who makes the fullest use of psychoanalysis (in my courses in Victorian and modern literature), a number of our senior professors are well acquainted with depth psychology and make use of it (with reservations and qualifications necessitated by their theories of scholarship and criticism) in various phases of their teaching. Citing only our better known men and their fields: Professor Robert B. Heilman, Chairman of the department, teaches drama and fiction; Professor Porter G. Perrin (rhetoric and creative writing); Professor Brents Sterling (Shakespeare and the Seventeenth Century); Professor Edward E. Bostetter (criticism and the Romantic period); Professor Sophus Keith Winther (criticism and the Victorian period). And, since all of these men teach a number of different courses in their various fields, our department is, in my opinion, quite advanced in its recognition and application of depth psychology.

[We might also refer to the course mentioned by Dr. Boothe in the communication reproduced above. Are there any others? We should like to know about them and to pass them on to interested members.]

Additions to the Subscription List as of June 15

Correction of an error in an entry in the last listing:

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